



Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Director

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

June 25, 2009

WHS 09-02

TO: County Agricultural Commissioners

SUBJECT: PHYSICIAN CONSULTATION ON PESTICIDE-RELATED ISSUES AND
WHS BRANCH ASSISTANCE ON EPISODE INVESTIGATIONS

The Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) Worker Health and Safety (WHS) Branch scientists provide technical assistance each year to several county agricultural commissioners (CACs) on pesticide-related illness or injury investigations. In addition, a licensed physician working under contract for the WHS Branch provides support to CACs and healthcare providers during investigations and complaints. These services include responding to pesticide-related health questions from the persons exposed to pesticides, responding to inquiries from physicians treating patients, recommending or coordinating urine and blood sample collection with hospital and clinical personnel, and assisting CAC investigators in interviewing persons who may have been exposed to pesticides.

Physician Consultation and Services

Dr. Michael O'Malley, under contract with the University of California Davis, is usually available each Thursday in the WHS Branch office, and on-call during business hours the rest of the week to assist CACs and healthcare providers in responding to medical and health-related inquiries. To properly utilize these services, the WHS Branch prioritized the following tasks covered by Dr. O'Malley:

First Priority Level

Assist in triage during investigations of pesticide-related episodes. This includes consulting with physicians and medical personnel to assist them in diagnosing pesticide-related illnesses or injuries, consulting with medical personnel regarding biological sample collection, conducting on-site interviews of persons who may have been exposed to pesticides, and conducting limited medical examinations.

Assist in post-triage and follow-up to inquiries from healthcare providers. This includes responding to inquiries from physicians and other healthcare providers who are conducting follow-up visits of patients who continue to exhibit pesticide-related illness or injury symptoms. This also includes responding to inquiries from physicians and other healthcare providers who need assistance in diagnosing or treating patients post-triage.



Second Priority Level

In coordination with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), give presentations on the Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP) and provide medical education materials to community physicians, clinics, or other community groups.

Testify as an expert medical witness during legal proceedings carried out by CAC.

Procedures for Requesting Physicians Services

Due to limited resources in the WHS Branch, CAC staff should follow the procedures listed below to request Dr. O'Malley's services.

CAC staff should contact one of the WHS Branch scientists listed below and provide information about the request. These scientists will screen the request to determine the priority level and whether it requires immediate attention, or further research. The WHS Branch will determine the level of Branch involvement based on the circumstances of the case.

George Farnsworth, Environmental Program Manager I, and Supervisor of the Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP). Telephone Number: (916) 445-4163.

Dr. Louise Mehler, Research Scientist II (Epidemiology/Biostatistics) in PISP.
Telephone Number: (916) 445-4190.

Dr. Nino Yanga, Research Scientist III (Epidemiology/ Biostatistics) in PISP.
Telephone Number: (916) 445-6387.

First Priority Level requests will be processed immediately. The WHS Branch scientist will contact Dr. O'Malley and provide him with the information necessary to respond to the CAC request.

Second Priority Level requests will be triaged to determine whether the Branch can provide the service or whether the request will be referred to Dr. O'Malley. The county will be notified whether this service will be provided.

Telephone Inquiries from the Public

WHS Branch scientists and Dr. O'Malley can respond to a limited number of telephone inquiries from the public regarding health effects resulting from pesticide exposure. If a person contacts the CAC asking these types of questions, contact one of the scientists listed above. The WHS Branch scientists will research the matter and appropriately respond to the person's inquiry, or refer them to other sources of information.

Assistance by WHS Branch Scientists on Pesticide-related Illness/Injury Investigations

WHS Branch scientists provide technical assistance to CACs each year on a number of illness or injury investigations. In addition, Branch scientists, in coordination with the CACs, may assist the CAC or participate in investigations. WHS participation is usually triggered by incidents involving current issues (i.e., worker notification since WHS is revising the notification regulations), a particularly serious health effect, or many people involved in an incident. WHS is also available to collect dislodgeable foliar residues to determine if it is safe to enter a field, coordinate collection of clothing or biological samples to assist in determining exposure levels, provide laboratory support or assist in interviewing persons exposed to pesticides.

If you need assistance from the WHS Branch on a pesticide-related illness or injury investigation, please contact Don Richmond, Research Scientist II (Chemical Sciences) at (916) 445-4192.

If you have any questions about the services available from the WHS Branch, please contact George Farnsworth of my staff at (916) 445-4163.

Sincerely,

(original signed by S. Edmiston)

Susan Edmiston, Environmental Program Manager II
Chief, Worker Health and Safety Branch
(916) 445-4222

cc: Mr. George Farnsworth, Environmental Program Manager I, WHS
Dr. Nan Gorder, Chief, DPR Enforcement Branch
Dr. Michael O'Malley, University of California, Davis
Dr. Louise Mehler, Research Scientist II, WHS
Dr. Nino Yanga, Research Scientist III, WHS
Mr. Don Richmond, Research Scientist II, WHS
Mr. James E. Shattuck, DPR Agricultural Commissioner Liaison